

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

28 August 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: A Possible Next Stage in the Congo

SUMMARY

At the moment, we still believe that the rebellious groups in the Congo are weak and for the most part disorganized, and that small, well-led forces could scatter them. Yet the rebels have displayed some staying power and gained greater support in Africa, while Leopoldville's control over the Congo countryside as well as its international position continues to dwindle. As a consequence, the insurgency may soon be beyond the capabilities of a comparatively small number of mercenaries and gendarmes to deal with. If events continue along present lines, Tshombe may become convinced that he cannot reverse the insurrectionary tide and either make a deal with the rebels or flee to his Katanga base.

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Introduction

1. Three weeks ago we declared that "the crucial question is whether Tshombe will be able to achieve a significant improvement in

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GROUP 1
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declassification

the performance of the troops at his disposal before a major part of the Congo falls to the rebels."* Noting that the rebel groups were weak and unorganized, we made the judgment that "even small government forces, if disciplined and well-led, could scatter the insurgents." This judgment was based on an implicit assumption that Tshombe would move fairly quickly.

2. At the present moment, this assessment of the situation is probably still true, and the issue may still be resolved if Tshombe's mercenaries can be placed in the field and if fairly large-scale external military assistance is maintained. Nevertheless, the area under Leopoldville's nominal control has continued to dwindle, and the situation may soon shift into a new stage where small forces of mercenaries and gendarmes will be unable to cope with the rebels.

Current Situation

3. There is still no unified leadership of the Congolese rebels; indeed the degree of influence wielded by various leading figures in the Committee of National Liberation (CNL) is far

*

SNIE 65-64, "Short-Term Prospects for the Tshombe Government in the Congo," dated 5 August 1964. (SECRET)

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from clear. Efforts are being made by Gbenye and perhaps by Gizenga to establish some control in the eastern Congo. As yet, however, these efforts have not been very successful.

4. Meanwhile the insurrections in the eastern Congo spread in a sort of chain reaction. Small numbers of insurgents, often aided by the leading local witch doctor and joined by disaffected jeunesse (armed political youth), move into an area; the ANC units panic; their flight to the next town demoralizes the garrison there and helps to precipitate another collapse. In this fashion, and despite occasional setbacks (Bukavu, North Katanga), the rebels have managed to destroy Leopoldville's control -- never more than rudimentary -- in vast expanses of territory in the east and to push so far westward as to threaten Coquilhatville. In the process, their staying power and effectiveness are improving; in Bukavu, the rebels displayed an ability to fight well while sustaining heavy losses, and in the Stanleyville takeover they were reasonably well organized.

5. At the same time, Tshombe has failed to deliver the prompt military response necessary to deal with the rebels at minimum cost. Belgian military advisors have been slow in coming, and the Belgians have been hedging their bets by initiating liaison

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with the CNL. Tshombe's South African and Southern Rhodesian mercenaries have thus far scarcely been brought to bear on the situation. The obvious political disadvantages to Tshombe of relying so heavily on white mercenaries and Western support can only be offset if their assistance is swiftly and decisively employed.

6. The rebels' external position has improved markedly. They continue to receive funds and advice from Peiping's expanded missions in Brazzaville and Bujumbura. Leopoldville's inept handling of relations with Congo (Brazzaville) and Burundi have strengthened the rebels' foothold in those countries. As for Tshombe's international standing, the growing impression in Africa that he cannot stem the rebel tide, and his increasing reliance on discredited white elements, make "Africanization" of the problem almost impossible and prevent even moderate African states such as Nigeria and Ethiopia from coming to his aid.

Prospects

7. Simply by remaining in place and benefiting from daily experience, together with some degree of Chinese Communist advice and assistance, the rebels may be able further to increase their cohesion and effectiveness and assert a kind of primitive control

in much of the eastern Congo. They have already improved their communications and troop transport. As their capabilities increase, the Chinese Communists, and probably the USSR and radical Africans as well, will probably be willing to supply clandestinely more materiel and greater economic aid. Stanleyville radio has already appealed to the UAR for assistance.

8. In these circumstances, the nature of the insurgency will have significantly changed. It will have become the kind of rebellion that cannot be dealt with except by large-scale, coordinated, military operations. Tshombe almost certainly will not have forces capable of such operations. He may decide that he cannot reverse the tide of local insurrections. The fall of Coquilhatville or of still-threatened Bukavu might be the catalyst in this decision. Tshombe might then decide to: (a) make a deal with the rebels or (b) flee to his Katanga stronghold.

9. Tshombe has probably remained in touch with some of the rebel leaders, and he might come to believe that he could meet their primary demands, i.e., jettisoning Kasavubu and Mobutu, at small cost to his own interests. He may also be receiving advice from the Belgian Government and his Belgian advisors to consider a

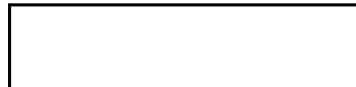
deal, perhaps under the guise of a national reconciliation. However, if the rebels' fortunes continue to flourish, their price will rise, and Tshombe may shortly be unable to meet it.

10. In these circumstances, Tshombe would be likely to withdraw to Katanga. Munongo, his chief lieutenant, has displayed continuing interest in building up the Katanga police as distinct from the national forces. Tshombe would be particularly likely to take this step if an Organization of African Unity (OAU) meeting attempted to pillory him for the mess in the Congo. These events would usher in a new kind of disorder among Tshombe's victorious rivals which could open the way to greater Chinese and Soviet influence and spill over into neighboring countries.

11. Meanwhile, principally as a result of US pressure, Kasavubu and Tshombe have requested a meeting of the OAU. This meeting will probably take the form of a Ministerial Council session. African political currents are running strongly against Tshombe, and it is almost certain that in an OAU forum many African states will press the Tshombe government to: (a) broaden its political base to include CNL leaders, and (b) discontinue foreign military assistance, including mercenaries. There is also a good chance that they will press the US to withdraw military

support, including pilots from Tshombe. Much will depend on Tshombe's political performance both before and at the OAU meeting. In the past the OAU Council has avoided difficult decisions and the chances are that it would either recommend an investigating mission or an emergency meeting of the OAU Heads of State to adopt proposals along the lines described. This would pose serious new problems for the US and Belgium, but would leave the way open for continued Communist covert assistance.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



ABBOT SMITH
Acting Chairman

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Memorandum

TO : The Acting Director

DATE: 28 August 1964

FROM : The Acting AD/NE

SUBJECT: Attached Memorandum re the Congo

This memorandum was discussed with representatives of
OCI and DDP, who generally concurred in it.